



*Notes from the Front*  
*Note Number 5*  
*July 2004*



Now over 120 days into Operation Iraqi Freedom II, the Dagger Brigade Combat Team is continuing to root out the enemies of Iraq while simultaneously balancing our effort of making this historic land into a fully functioning and self-reliant nation. Much of the infrastructure and governmental systems that are needed to run the country are in the stages of development, or not present at all – development of these systems is a major area of emphasis as our soldiers continue to maintain a delicate balance between combat and stability operations. The BCT is helping rebuild government organizations and help repair the infrastructure. Progress is slow, but be assured, we are making progress. The accelerated Transfer of Sovereignty on 28 June has set the stage for the Iraqi Interim Government to exercise control. We remain partnered with local governments and Iraqi Security Forces to make this a safe place to live and prosper for all Iraqi citizens.

Our main mission here is to maintain a safe and secure environment, but we know that one day Iraqis will be responsible for their own security. That is why we have moved forward in training, equipping and integrating the Iraqi National Guard – they were recently renamed and we used to refer to these organizations as the “Iraqi Civil Defense Corps.” We mentioned this organization in the last note home but now more of our soldiers are interacting with these brave Iraqis. Every day officers, NCOs and soldiers visit ING compounds to liaise with their Iraqi counterparts. The Iraqis are now accompanying US Forces on patrols and manning Traffic Control Points that were once manned exclusively by the US Army. The Iraqis are performing these missions and performing them well! Forty-one soldiers from the 201st ICDC Battalion (working with TF 1-18) received the newly minted Iraqi Achievement Medal for their actions during the month of April. While those soldiers are honing their skills in the field, the Battalion and Brigade Staffs are receiving lessons on how to Command and Control their formations. Some of the Iraqi officers have experience in the old Iraqi Army, and they are eager to learn how a successful and professional Army like ours does business. We maintain constant contact with our ING counterparts, primarily to build their systems, but also to help tailor their organization to run as proficiently as possible. Our efforts are designed to build trust between Iraqis and Americans – trust that is a requirement to operate effectively in Iraq. Meanwhile, we are setting the stage for Iraqis to secure their own areas and reducing the need for our forces. A success story for all parties involved!



We are also assisting in rebuilding the infrastructure in Salah Ad Din, but we are not doing all the work ourselves. In order to give some relief to the high unemployment and give the people a sense of pride in their own efforts, the BCT uses funds set aside for civil projects to contract or hire Iraqi businesses and



workers to rebuild or develop the things needed in everyday life. Daily there are crews cleaning up the trash on the side of the roads in Tikrit and Bayji. Planning for building or refurbishing schools is underway and contractors are being selected for the projects.

Pictured here is an unsolicited sign thanking all Americans for building a water filtration system that brought clean drinking water to a town of 5,000 people – the Steel Tigers of TF 1-77 led the way on this effort. In Aruashed, which is just northwest of Balad City

center, a Project known as Nissan Seven, had its ground breaking ceremony on 8 June. This project will help over 800 Iraqi farmers, turning area that was just desert before, into a contributing part of the local economy. This project will not only help the people, but will be a big step in building a bond between the people of Aruashed and American forces in the area. On 23 June in Tikrit, the province held its first Trade Fair Symposium with the help of the 415th Civil Affairs Battalion, and the 9th Engineers. This symposium will help private contractors from the area learn to advertise themselves in a free-market economy. This is all taking place in with the help of the Dagger Brigade Combat Team coupled with hard work and dedication of several key Iraqi citizens.

We still do our normal job of soldiering. While doing so, some members of Charlie Company 2-108 IN, assigned to TF 1-26 helped a hostage return home. While conducting a security patrol the soldiers found Mr. Thomas Hamill; a Haliburton employee who was taken hostage in April. The soldiers secured Mr. Hamill, dressed his wounds and got him on a helicopter that started his journey back to the United States. It was a great moment for TF 1-26, the BCT, and the Big Red One. The press coverage was nice and it was a chance for the American people to enjoy a positive side of the mission, but even more gratifying was the fact that we were able to save one of our own and ensure that terrorist permanently affected one less family.



Memorial Day took on a new significance for us this year — many friends were no longer here to celebrate with us. We held a ceremony in their memory. Plaques were made for each lost soldier, and a 1st Infantry Division patch was placed on each one. We will never forget the sacrifice of those who have given their life in the name of freedom.

On 6 June, the Dagger Brigade Combat Team held its combat patch ceremony, with MG Batiste present to officiate the ceremony. The Commanding General presented all Battalion and Task Force Commanders with 1st Infantry Division Combat Patches, symbolizing the authorization for all soldiers in the Dagger Brigade Combat Team to wear the Big Red One combat patch. The patch is awarded to all soldiers assigned to a unit in a declared hostile environment for at least 30 days. This recognition of wartime service was a very special moment for the entire Division, on a very special day — historically significant as it was the 60th Anniversary of the Normandy assault – D-Day. Every Task Force conducted a similar ceremony at their respective Forward Operating Base.



We also played a big role in helping with the Transition of Sovereignty by making sure that the Province of Salah Ad Din was prepared. We oversaw the election of the new governor — Governor Hamad Hamood (former Deputy Governor) who was elected on 27 June. To assist in equipping the ING, we delivered over 60 vehicles to the Iraqi National Guard, which will be used for security and conducting patrols. Transportation for these Iraqi volunteers is absolutely critical as the National Guard continues to make progress toward independent operations.

**HOT!** The temperature is rising and the mercury is always over 100 degrees. Soldiers are drinking plenty of water, and will make it thru the hottest days of summer. Please keep us in your thoughts and prayers – you are always in ours! Until next time...

**DUTY FIRST!!**

COL Randy Dragon  
Commander  
Dagger Brigade Combat Team